

Hesychius, s. v. *σάλπη*

By ALEXANDER KESSISOGLU Athens

Hesychius has the following entry: "*σάλπη*· ἰχθύς ποιός, ὃν καὶ βοῦν καλέουσιν." There has been no explanation, as far as I know, as to why this fish is called "bull." I think that it is because this fish eats ordure, as I will attempt to show. Aristotle informs us that the saupe fish is caught by using ordure as bait (Arist. *HA* 534 a 15). And Epicharmus writes that "... *σκατοφάγοι σάλπαι βδελυχραί.*" (Epich. Kaibel 63 = Olivieri 24). The saupe has this trait in common with cattle, at least with the cattle of Boetia and Cyprus, as we see from two testimonia: the scholia to Aristophanes *Plutus* 706 "*σκατοφάγον: ἀναίσθητον. εἴρηται δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν παρὰ Βοιωτοῖς βοῶν, οἱ διὰ τὴν πολλὴν ἀναισθησίαν σκατὰ ἤσθιον.*"¹⁾ The cattle on Cyprus made a similar impression "*Βοῦς Κύπριος, ἴσον τῷ σκατοφάγος εἶ, λέγονται γὰρ οἱ βόες ἐν Κύπρῳ σκατοφαγεῖν.*"²⁾ Thus we now have the explanation why the fish *σάλπη* was called *βοῦς*.

Fish are also referred to as cattle in an entirely different context, namely [Ovid's] *Halientica* line 94 "nam gaudent pelago quales scombrigue, bovesque." It is generally thought that "boves" here are fish of the Salachian genus, but this has been strongly questioned.³⁾ According to Oppian, *Halientica* II. 141 this fish "*Ἔστι δέ... πηλοῦσιν ἐφέστιος ἰμυφάγος βοῦς,*" whereas the *boves* in Ovid's *Halientica* "... gaudent pelago ...," they are deep sea fish. I suggest that the fish mentioned in Ovid's *Halientica* 94 are *σάλπαι* of the kind called "*σάλπαι πελάγια.*"⁴⁾

¹⁾ W.J.W. Koster, Scholia in Aristophanem, Part IV. 1, 1960, p. 163.

²⁾ Zenob. 2. 82 and cf. Diogen. 3. 49 "*Βοῦς Κύπριος εἶ ἦτοι κοπροφάγος· τοιοῦτοι γὰρ οἱ ἐκεῖσε βόες.*" The comic poet Antiphanes makes it clear how this idea arose (frag. 126, *CAF* II 61–2, ed. Kock). Cf. I. Vahlen, *Varia*, *Hermes* 43 (1908) 514.

³⁾ This is the fish Cephaloptera Giorna, a selachian, Arist. *HA* 540 B 17. Cf. D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, *A Glossary of Greek Fishes*, London, 1947, p. 35, comments on the line in Ovid, "Mentioned by Ovid Hal. 94 ...; but the allusion seems inappropriate or obscure." Cf. J.A. Richmond, ed., *The halientica ascribed to Ovid*, 1962, p. 74.

⁴⁾ Xenokrates I. 21 "*Σάλπαι αἱ πελάγια, δριμεῖαι, εὔστομοι...*" (*Physici et Medici Graeci Minores*, ed. I.L. Ideler, P. 123, 16).